Race

Tommy Tan

Temple University

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There is a common misconception between the definition of the words race and ethnicity. It is heavily misappropriated in topics such as racial tension, social issues, etc.. To be absolutely clear, race describes the physical manifestation of a human person, including but not limited to skin, hair, and eye color. Ethnicity describes the culture of a human person, including but not limited to nationality, language and ancestry. An individual can have more than one ethnicity but only one race, with the exception of ‘mixed race’ because that is slightly complicated to classify. In this paper, I will dig deep into one of the most controversial words, race. It is a term that is most often used in history books, particularly U.S. history, when racism was and is still permeated in modern society. Additionally, I will offer my opinion on how to combat racism since it’s almost impossible to completely annihilate it.

Race is an important concept because it identifies who we are as a human person, externally. Race can be categorized as a social category or a biological category. For now, I will define race in its biological category. Race is a measure for objective truth that can be determined with objective accuracy. (Johnson 2014). However, more often than not, we see “physical differences within a race than between races” (Barkan 2012). People of different races does not have to look all the same; whites may have darker skin color than blacks, blacks may have blue or green eyes, Asians might have hazel-like hair colors, etc..

Additionally, race can be used as a tool for social power. Throughout the course of history, blacks accounted for the majority of the slave population in the 15th-18th century. This allowed their oppressors, mostly white, to treat them as non-humans and thus gain power over them. Many historical texts have described and explained the persecution of blacks by the white ‘overlords’ and concluded that because of the various races that exist in this world, racism has become a tool of hatred by the elites.

It’s no surprise in the current state of affairs the horrendous, vile statements made by the President of the United States, in an effort to re-gain ‘white supremacy’ by ‘Making America Great Again’. White supremacy is an example of racism. Racism is defined as the “belief in the superiority of one race over another, which often results in discrimination and prejudice towards people based on their race or ethnicity” (Wikipedia 2018). It is more apparent in societies where multi-racial/multi-ethnic people co-exist with one another. It is a word with a negative connotation and used in a negative context. Racism can only be determined with anecdotal and observational data amongst people. It happens in a variety of different ways; it can be detected when people make “jokes” or negative comments about an ethnic group, call out “racist” names, and bully/harass others “because of their race” (Australian Human Rights Commission 2018). In social media, racism is more prevalent there because it has evolved into some type of meme, wherein people post funny images that implies subtle racism in the context of the image. It is unfortunate that in today’s society, it is extremely difficult to know if someone is a racist towards another because of these ‘memes’, which are ‘supposedly’ should be taken light-heartedly.

There is also “invisible racism”, which includes all of the points I have mentioned about implied racism but it extends to institutions and the workplace. For example, when banks asks new applicants to fill out forms that is in English, it discounts the minority population who do not possess any formal knowledge of English to confidently fill out the forms. Though, it seems minor, it is still classified as a category of racism. In Tel Aviv, the Ben Gurion Airport routinely perform background checks on every incoming customer that intends to either (1) stay in Israel and/or (2) transfer from Israel to another country. The Israeli guards harassed “Arabs” over any other ethnicity (Frantzman 2018). Though Israel is an obvious example of this type of behavior, it’s going to be no surprise if America enforced a similar policy to it.

Racism is becoming more prevalent in today’s society than ever. Since the Civil Rights movement, it is true that minorities and blacks have more rights than their ancestors but racism still exists indirectly, whether it’s institutionally or amongst friends. One solution that I propose of is to not entertain the thoughts of racist, or insensitive ethnic jokes. Entertaining such thoughts makes the perpetuator think that jokes insensitive racial/ethnic jokes are all right to make fun of.

Additionally, I believe racism can be quelled at an early age; parents should train their kids to be intolerant of using racist slurs and jokes. Knowing that at an early age develops the brain’s prefrontal cortex into allowing to become more acceptable to diverse groups/ideas.

Furthermore, thinking before one should speak is a huge emphasis to reducing racism at its bare minimum. As the adage goes, action speaks louder than words, but sometimes words can hurt more than anything else. The same can be said for this solution.

Lastly, becoming a part of a diverse group is a huge step into the door of quelling racism. Recognizing different backgrounds of people and how they deal with racism allows one to be more open minded and accepting. Not only do you know of their experiences with how they deal with discrimination, one can get multiple ideas on how to end the fight against racism. It’s rewarding and encouraging.

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